



WELS COMMISSION ON CONGREGATIONAL COUNSELING 2018 REPORT TO THE TWELVE DISTRICTS

“Christ’s Love, Our Calling”

Our Calling

The Commission on Congregational Counseling (CCC) assists WELS congregations to assess and evaluate ministry, review biblical teachings and principles that impact ministry, develop plans to adjust and expand ministry in appropriate ways, and carry out their plans over a period of time.

The CCC is one of six commissions within Congregational Services, along with: Discipleship, Evangelism, Lutheran Schools, Special Ministries, and Worship. The CCC’s consultation work with congregations helps to identify common needs. The other commissions then provide resources, training, and personal assistance to help meet those needs.

The CCC serves under the Conference of Presidents (COP), providing a means to offer encouragement and support to their congregations. In that capacity, the CCC also analyzes and quantifies trends within the synod to aid in planning our joint ministry efforts.

Our Current Situation

Leadership changes

Since 2014, Rev. Jonathan Hein had served as an in-parish director, splitting his time between CCC work and his local congregation in Summerville, SC. In April 2017, the COP called Rev. Hein to take up the CCC work full time, asking him to operate the CCC offices out of WELS Center for Mission and Ministry in Pewaukee, WI and to also become the coordinator for Congregational Services. Rev. Hein accepted the call and began in that expanded role in September 2017.

Current programs

The CCC offers three programs to congregations.

SELF-ASSESSMENT AND ADJUSTMENT PROGRAM (SAA)

The SAA program consists of four phases:

1. *Establishment phase* – Here a congregation works through a community profile, a congregational profile, and an electronic pulse survey. This allows both the congregation and their assigned counselor to have a more complete understanding of the congregation’s current ministry context.
2. *Assessment phase* – This is the heart of the SAA program. An assigned CCC counselor is on site. On Saturday, he leads the congregation in a daylong Bible study about various aspects of ministry: worship, outreach, discipleship, youth ministry, fellowship, stewardship, etc. The congregation looks at Biblical principles in each of these areas and then discusses ways to adjust or expand local ministry in the areas.
3. *Adjustment phase* – The counselor produces a detailed report, summarizing important findings from the community and congregational profile, as well as the pulse survey. Most importantly, he makes recommendations based on the congregation members’ proposals to adjust or expand ministry. Those



recommendations will often include using various resources produced by the other commissions within Congregational Services.

4. *Implementation phase* – For up to ten months, the counselor will remain in contact with the congregational leadership, offering ongoing encouragement and advice as the congregation works at implementing the ministry adjustments.

It is important to stress the “S” in the SAA program. Self-analysis. Self-adjustment. The view of the CCC is not that the counselors are outside experts who will tell congregations the right way to do ministry. A CCC counselor cannot understand a congregation or a community as well as the people who have been there for years. Thus, the counselor serves to facilitate healthy discussion among the congregational members about how they might best serve the kingdom. He provides an objective set of eyes and ears as the congregation looks at the situation. He also helps the congregation to find the resources they need to adjust and expand ministry as they themselves determine best.

MINISTRY ORGANIZATION AND STAFFING EVALUATION (MOSE)

The MOSE program is the most comprehensive program offered by the CCC. Over the course of several months, a counselor and congregation work together to do three things.



1. *Evaluate the congregation’s ministry and ministry context.* - This includes doing the community and congregational analysis done in the SAA program. However, it also includes examining (or producing) the congregational strategic planning process: the definition of mission, the clarification of core values, the envisioning of the desired future, and the formation of goals that attempt to move the congregation from the current reality towards that desired future. The end result of this step is a long-range plan for the congregation to utilize moving forward.
2. *Evaluate the congregation’s organization.* - With a long-range plan in hand, the congregation now considers whether they are properly organized to implement that plan. This includes looking at church governance. It includes looking at the processes the congregation uses to convert long-range goals into annual objectives. It includes evaluating the congregation’s current method of maintaining plan performance.
3. *Evaluate the congregation’s staffing.* - This final step evaluates what is needed in the way of human resources to implement the long-range plan. It looks at the volunteerism potential within the congregation and implements programs to increase it. It looks at the skill sets and interests of called workers and hired staff in an effort to aid them in their congregational service and get them the resources they need to carry out their responsibilities well. Finally, this step may include recommendations for staff expansion.

SCHOOL OF STRATEGIC PLANNING (SPP)

The School of Strategic Planning expands the various “schools” offered by WELS Congregational Services, such as the Commission on Evangelism’s *School of Outreach* and the Commission on Worship’s *School of Worship Enrichment*.

The *School of Strategic Planning* brings groups of congregations together—the pastors and the church council—for a weekend. At these workshops learn about the various components of a strategic plan: a mission statement, clarifying core values, appropriate goal setting, producing a ministry plan and subsequent action plan, plan review, setting long range objectives, leadership development, etc. In breakout groups, the presenter(s) works with congregations to actually produce some of these components.



Combined, these three programs have served over 180 congregations. One of the bigger challenges with the programs is demand. For SAA and MOSE, there is typically a waiting period.

Conclusion of the demographic study

In 2015, at the request of the COP, the CCC began a two year study of demographic trends in WELS. The study focused on three things.

1. The overall “greying” of WELS.
2. The ability of WELS to retain or gain members of the millennial generation.
3. The challenges facing our rural congregations.

The study included asking congregations to provide the number of members they have in a number of different age categories. Moving forward, that information will be asked for in every year that is evenly divisible by five.

The study resulted in a comprehensive demographic report that was presented to the synod in convention in 2017. You can find a full copy of the report here - <https://tinyurl.com/welsdemographics>. You can find a video summary of the report here - <https://vimeo.com/228716352>.

MissionInsite: a powerful new tool

The CCC has negotiated a contract with MissionInsite, a company that provides extremely detailed demographic information for religious organizations.

The founder of MissionInsite had previously founded the Percept Group. (Many WELS congregations and district mission boards have ordered “percept studies” in an effort to better understand their community.) MissionInsite’s data is more current, being updated every six months. Moreover, instead of having to pay \$200 for each percept study, the contract with MissionInsite lets any WELS congregation or entity (such as a DMB) run as many reports as they would like.

Congregations are even able to upload a membership roster, which MissionInsite will then plot and use to compare the congregation with the community. Congregations can also use that feature to group members regionally, to find which members are near a new prospect, etc. (That membership data is available *only* to the local congregation.)

If you would like to have a congregation member receive access to MissionInsite, contact Maxine Neumann at maxine.neumann@wels.net. Again, it is entirely free for your congregation to run as many reports as you want. Please note, while very intuitive, it takes some time to learn all the features of MissionInsite. That training is provided through video tutorials offered by MissionInsite.

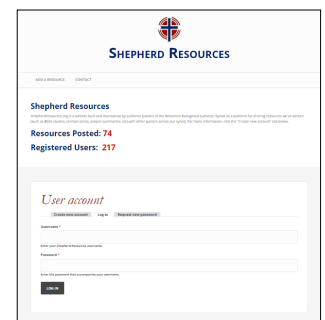


Shepherd Resources: a way to share

The 2015 synod in convention passed a memorial asking the CCC to produce an “online repository” where pastors could share ministry resources they had produced. That repository has been complete for over a year. It is located at www.shepherdresources.org.

Shepherd Resources requires pastors to store their shared resources in a platform like Google Drive (which is free). The pastors then provide descriptions of the resources and share the links on Shepherd Resources. Those links are “tagged” in a number of ways—by keyword, by user rating, etc.—and those tags are fully searchable.

Shepherd Resources is a way to share anything that might be useful to other pastors, such as Bible studies, worship plans, worship folder templates, evangelism materials, newsletters, devotions, and ministry plans. As more pastors become registered users and upload materials, Shepherd Resources will be even more useful.



A Look Ahead

Online Resource Center

The Congregational Services report in the RTTD highlights the development of an online resource center. The CCC resources you will find there are meant to aid in congregational planning. New resources will be added every six months.

Merging Congregations

One of the biggest CCC projects for 2019 will be producing resources that help congregations work through the possibilities of merging. This is becoming a common consideration, especially in the Midwest, as congregations that are in decline will often consider merging with a sister congregation in an effort to revitalize ministry and operate more cost effectively. However, for a merger to go well, there are a number of preliminary steps that need to take place. The resources produced by the CCC will walk leadership teams from congregations through those steps.

Circuit Pastor Assistance

Currently, the two most common requests the CCC receives for assistance come from congregations that 1) want to work through the Self-Assessment and Adjustment program, or 2) want help in considering how to undergo a merger with another WELS church. When the requests become voluminous, it necessitates a waiting period. To enable us to get help to churches more quickly, in 2019 the CCC will begin to offer training in those two programs to circuit pastors, at the request of the district. Participating circuit pastors would be able to offer a congregation a very abbreviated version of the SAA program, as well as facilitate discussion of how to approach a congregational merger.

National Conference on Lutheran Leadership

The Congregational Services report in the RTTD mentions the national leadership conference that will be held in early 2020, likely in the Chicago area. The CCC is working at securing funding to offset much of the cost of this conference in an effort to make it as affordable as possible for our congregations. Still, it would be wise for congregations to consider budgeting for the conference, which will be valuable for all types of congregational leaders: pastors, lay leaders, principals, etc.

For more information

If you would like more information about the CCC or any of its programs, please contact Jonathan Hein at jonathan.hein@wels.net or 414-256-3227.

Respectfully submitted,
The members of the CCC

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